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Ma'l in Chinese Records - Mindoro or Bai? An Examination of a Historical Puzzle

Go Bon Juan

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COMMENTARY

Ma'I in Chinese Records—Mindoro or Bai? An Examination of a Historical Puzzle

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Ma'I is the first place in the Philippines ever mentioned in ancient Chinese records, or in any foreign account for that matter. Hence, Ma'I is significant in Philippine historiography in general and in studies of Philippine relations with foreign countries in particular. Early historians equated Ma'I with Mindoro because there were people there called Mait, apart from which no other basis existed for this equation. This paper points out that there are convincing grounds to take Bai (or Ba'I) in southwest Luzon as the Ma'I referred to in ancient Chinese records. Ba'I had a more advanced material culture than Mindoro, and it covered a wide area located in the present-day provinces of Rizal, Quezon, and Laguna that produced precious merchandise valued in the trade with China.

KEYWORDS: *Ma'I, Mindoro, Bai, Laguna, Chinese records*

The name Ma'I is significant in Philippine historiography for being the first place in the Philippines ever mentioned in Chinese historical accounts or, for that matter, in any foreign account. Ma'I appeared in Vol. 186 of the *Song Dynasty Annals*. An edict of the fourth year of Kai Bao (971 AD) mentioned Ma'I as part of the luxurious Chinese foreign trade in the tenth century.[1]

> In the fourth year of the Kai Bao period, a superintendent of maritime trade was set up in Guangzhou, and afterwards in Hangzhou and Mingzhou also a superintendent was appointed for all Arab, Achen, Java, Borneo, Ma-yi, and Srivijaya barbarians, whose trade passed through there, they taking away gold, silver, strings of cash, lead, tin, many-colored silk, and porcelain, and selling aromatics, rhinoceros horn and ivory, coral, amber, pearls, fine steel, sea-turtle leather, tortoise shell, carnelians and agate, carriage wheel rims, crystal, foreign cloth, ebony, sapan wood, and such things. (Scott 1989, 1)

Aside from Vol. 186 of the *Song Dynasty Annals*, other records in the Song and Yuan Dynasties mentioned Ma'I, and these include "Champa Accounts" and "Po-Ni [Borneo] Accounts," Vol. 489, *Song Dynasty Annals*; chapters on "Champa, Butuan," Book 197, *Song Compendium of Important Events;* chapter on "Kingdom of Po-Ni [Borneo]," Vol. 179, *Taiping Xing Guo Accounts*; "Kingdom of Po-Ni [Borneo]" and "San-su [Three Islands], Puli-lu," Vol. 1, *Zhu Fan Zhi* [An Account of Various Barbarians] and "Betel Nut" and "Yellow Wax," Vol. 2, and chapter on "Champa" and "Borneo," Vol. 332, *Wen Xian Tong Kao* [Encyclopedia of Literary Documents].[2]

However, most of the accounts in the list above did not cite the exact year the events in Ma'I happened or were recorded, except for "Chu-Po Accounts," in Vol. 489 of *Song Dynasty Annals* and the chapter on "Champa," in Vol. 332 of *Wen Xian Tong Kao*, which mentioned an event in the year 982 (seventh year of Taiping Xing-guo period): "There is also the country of Ma-i, which in the seventh year of the Taiping Xing-guo period (982) brought valuable merchandise to the Guangdong coast." Therefore, Ma'I was first mentioned in ancient Chinese records in the year 971, and the first record of China-Philippine relations, specifically bilateral relations with the Kingdom of Ma'I, was in the year 982.

A description of Ma'I from two ancient records appears below. The first is taken from the volume on "Kingdom of Ma'I" in the custom's inspector Zhao Ru-gua's *Zhu Fan Zhi* (1225), and the second is from the chapter on "Ma-I" in Wang Da-yuan's *Dao-I Zhi Lue* [Records of the Barbarians of the Isles] (1345).

"Ma-I" [from Zhao Ru-gua's *Zhu Fan Zhi*]

The country of Ma-I is to the north of Po-ni (Borneo). Over a thousand families are settled together along both banks of a creek. The natives cover themselves with a sheet of cotton cloth, or hide the lower part of the body with loin-cloth. There are bronze images of gods, of unknown origin, scattered about in the grassy wilderness. Pirates seldom come to this country.

When trading ships enter the anchorage, they stop in front of the official's place, for that is the place for bartering of the country. After a ship has been boarded, the natives mix freely with the ship's folk. The chiefs are in the habit of using white umbrellas, for which reason the traders offer them as gifts.

The custom of the trade is for the savage traders to assemble in crowds and carry the goods with them in baskets; and, even if one cannot at first know them, and can but slowly distinguish the men who remove the goods, there will yet be no loss. The savage traders will after this carry these goods on to other islands for barter, and, as a rule, it takes them as much as eight or nine months till they return, when they repay the traders on shipboard with what they have obtained (for the goods). Some, however, do not return within the proper term, for which reason vessels trading with Ma-I are the latest in reaching home.

The following places belong to this country: San-su [Three Islands], Pai-p'u-yen, P'u-li-lu, Li-kin-tung, Liu-Sin, and Li-han.

The products of the country consist of yellow wax, cotton, pearls, tortoise-shell, medicinal betel-nuts, and yuta cloth; and the foreign traders barter for these porcelain, trade-gold, iron censers, lead, coloured glass beads, and iron needles. (Zaide 1990, 1–2; Scott 1989)

"Ma-I" [from Wang Da-yuan's *Dao-I Zhi Lue*]

The mountainous range is flat and broad. The settlement is on the two banks of the stream. The fields are fertile. The climate is rather hot. In their customs they esteem the quality of chastity and uprightness. Both men and women do up their hair in a mallet-like tress. They wear a blue cotton shirt. When any woman is burying her husband, she shaves her hair and fasts for seven days, lying

> beside her dead husband. Most of them nearly die. If after seven days they are not dead, their relatives urge them to eat. Should they get quite well they cherish their chastity by not marrying again during their whole lives. There are some even, who, when the body of their dead husband is burning, get into the funeral pyre and die. At the burial of a great chief, two or three thousand (sic. could be twenty or thirty) male or female slaves are put to death for burying with him. The people boil seawater to make salt and ferment treacle (molasses) to make liquor. The natural products are kapok, yellow bees-wax, tortoise-shell, betel nuts, and cloth of various patterns. The Chinese goods used in trading are caldrons, pieces of iron, red cloth or taffetas of various color stripes, ivory, "tint" or the like. After agreeing on prices, the barbarian traders carry off the goods for bartering the native products and bring these products back to the Chinese in the amount agreed on. The Chinese vessels' traders (Filipinos) are trustworthy. They never fail to keep the agreement of their bargains. (Zaide 1990, 10)

Zhu Fan Zhi was published as a book in 1225, and *Dao-I Zhi Lue* in 1345. Historian have always based their interpretation of what or where Ma'I is on these two accounts. However, it is extremely difficult to make a definite statement concerning Ma'I based only on the obviously limited information provided by these two sources. In fact, the inference that Ma'I referred to Mindoro in the Chinese accounts is not really based on these two passages, but mainly on the fact that Mindoro used to be called "Mait," and the sound is homophonous with or sounds like the Chinese word Ma'I.

Because Ma'I was the first place in the Philippines ever to be mentioned in ancient Chinese records, and likewise the first place in the Philippines ever to be mentioned in any extant foreign record anywhere in the world, it is undoubtedly of great importance. Therefore, determining with accuracy the place referred to as Ma'I is of great significance to Philippine historiography. Nevertheless, the articles and research work on Ma'I have not explored any further the precise location of Ma'I. One important reason is that scholars have come to accept that Ma'I is Mindoro. Although there is scanty evidence, it has been accepted as fact. This author has done the same in equating Ma'I to Mindoro (Go 2001).

This paper, however, is an attempt to explore the historical puzzle of Ma'I—is it really Mindoro? Can it be Bai? This paper does not mean to refute the equation of Ma'I with Mindoro but to point out some questionable basis for the accepted convention. In fact, its main purpose is to encourage other scholars to do more extensive research and draw more convincing or definitive conclusions than what we have at present. It intends to highlight improbable conclusions, some incontrovertible evidence, and probable alternatives (like Bai or Laguna) to the erstwhile accepted identification of Ma'I with Mindoro.

An Exploration of Bai, Laguna

My initial suspicion that Ma'I could be Laguna and not Mindoro was bolstered by a trip to Laguna province, south of Manila, on 30 April 2002. Accompanied by two friends, Ruperto Peñamora and Evangelina Farolan Peñamora, my attention was drawn to the town of Bai whence both my friends hail. Mrs. Peñamora also introduced me to her sister, Elvira Farolan, who has consulted archival materials on Bai.

A significant fact struck this author. I was informed that Ba'I was the old name of Laguna province, and that it also used to be the provincial capital. The earlier province of Ba'I covered a wide area that included the present-day province of Rizal and part of Quezon province. Combined with the fact that Ba'I is homophonous with Ma'I, the information I received made me think that, not only is Ma'I in the Chinese accounts located in Laguna, but it could actually refer to Bai of Laguna. However, it must be noted (as will be explained later) that the old spelling of Ba'I, or Bai, was changed to Bay in later years.

These observations made me recall an earlier visit to three mountain areas located from the northern point to the south of Mindoro Island. There I observed the underdeveloped, impoverished, and simple indigenous tribes of Mindoro, known as the Mangyan. Although there are still seven Mangyan tribes in Mindoro, they are scattered in small communities composed of about thirty families each, living mostly in mountain villages. Could these indigenous tribes be the same Ma'I people who "brought precious merchandise to the shores of

Guangzhou" a thousand years ago? This question gave me another reason to consider Bai as Ma'I.

A third reason is that there is no Chinese equivalent for the sound of "B," and the Chinese usually use the sound "M" to replace "B." For example, the Chinese refer to Bataan as Miao-ta-an, Batangas as Ma-tang-an, and Bicol as Mi-kut, clearly showing that the sound of "M" in Chinese is the equivalent of "B" in Tagalog. Based on this linguistic fact, it is highly possible that the Ma'I in Chinese records is really Ba'I. In fact, if only for phonetics, Ma'I sounds closer to Ba'I than to Mait.

At the time I visited Laguna, a new book of short stories from the area had just been published. In *Cabinet of Wonders and other Laguna Short Stories* by Anita Feleo and David Sheniak (2001, 30) the town of Bay is described as follows: "During the ninth century, Chinese junks would sail southward down the Pasig River for Maynilad until they reached a tongue-shaped river that led to the lakeshore community that is now called Bay." Unfortunately, both authors are not historians but travel writers, and the statement is not supported by any historical evidence; it seemed more like a folktale in the region. Nevertheless, the story added a thread in my tapestry of exploration, further enhancing my interest and strengthening my suspicion that Ma'I could really have been Bai.

On 5 October 2004, accompanied by the Peñamoras, I made a special trip to the town of Bai (Bay), and also to a town called Dila (literally, tongue) located beside the lake. I interviewed a friend of the Peñamoras, Architect Cesar G. Aijama, who is also from Bai and an ardent researcher of the history of Bai and Laguna. He recommended that I consult a coffee table book by Reynaldo Gamboa Alejandro, entitled *Laguna de Bay—the Living Lake* (2002). Before the trip, Mrs. Peñamora had also photocopied some of the archival materials obtained by her sister Elvira. It was on this trip—in what I saw and in my interviews with the natives of Bai—that I learned that Laguna used to be known as Ba'I and that Laguna de Ba'I referred to the lake in the province of Ba'I, the spelling of which had been altered to what people know today: Laguna de Bay. The name itself referred to a body of water rather than to the whole area of Ba'I that extended from today's Laguna province to Rizal province.

An Exploration of Ancient Philippine Maps

Early on, I entertained doubts that Ma'I could not be Bai in Laguna because of the geographical location of the town of Bai, which is south of Laguna de Bay. I imagined that, sailing from China, the Chinese traders would have had to make a long detour to get to Laguna. The traders needed to enter Manila Bay and traverse the inland Pasig River to reach the town of Bai. Because it was not readily accessible to foreign ships, Bai, I thought, could not have been Ma'I; it would have been unlikely for Chinese traders to have traded directly with the Bai people. However, a chance examination of ancient maps of the Philippines at the Chang Rong Antique Shop and Tradewinds Bookstore at the Silahis Center in Intramuros, as well as information in the book *Pasig, River of Life,* revealed that Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay were contiguous in early times. This means that the early traders could readily sail to Laguna from Manila Bay because they used to be connected. Volcanic eruptions resulted in geological transformation, with land forming to separate what became two bodies of water.

Armando Manalo (1971, 31) writes:

> The river Pasig nearly never happened but for a physiographic accident. An upward flexure in the volcanic terrain in the Southern Tagalog region turned the shallow area of Laguna into a lake. At sometime in the dim archaeological past, the bay of Laguna and Manila Bay, similarly a low-lying area were thought to be one large body of water. The debris from frequent volcanic eruptions when the land was younger covered the intervening region, however, and since then the two separated bodies of water have maintained a tenuous liaison through the slender thread of the Pasig.

As early as 1910, an article by George I. Adams (1910, 97–103) had described how the strip of land that cut off Laguna de Bay from Manila Bay was formed. The author explains how Laguna de Bay and Manila Bay were divided by volcanic eruptions, citing the remains of shark's teeth found in the strip of land that divided the two as proving that the bed is evidently a marine or estuarine deposit. Adams also quoted Van Drasche, a geologist who made the earliest map of south-

western Luzon, who asserted that the lake was once an arm of the sea similar to Manila Bay, and that it was separated by an eruption of Taal and has since become fresh water.

The geological maps shown in figures 1 and 2, as well as the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century maps listed below (on display at the Chang Rong Antique shop), indicate that Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay were once connected. The last three maps named in the list are found in the *Environment and Natural Resources Atlas of the Philippines* by Gregorio Llorca Magdaraog (1998, 114, 116, 118).

1. *Les Isles Philippines, Celle de Formose, Le Sud de la Chine, Les Royaumes de Tunkin, de Cochinchine, de Camboge, de Siam, des Laos; avec partie de ceux de Pegu et d'Ava* (The Islands of the Philippines, those of Formosa, South of China, the Kingdoms of Tonkin, Cochinchina, Siam; with parts of those in Pegu and Ava), M. Bonne (undated)
2. *Archipel des Indes Orientales, qui comprend Les Isles de la Sonde, Moluques et Philippines* (Archipelago of the Oriental Indies, which includes the Islands of Sonde, Moluccas and the Philippines), Sr. Robert, 1750
3. *Les Isles de la Sonde, Moluques, Philippines, Carolines, et Mariannes* (The Islands of Sonde, Moluccas, Philippines, Carolines and Marianas), S. Robert de Vaugondy, 1762
4. *La Presqu' Isle De L'Inde au de la Du Gange, avec L'Arcihpel Des Indes. Partie Orientale* (The Near Island of India with that of the Gange, with the Indian Archipelago. Oriental Part), M. Bonne, 1770
5. *Carte Des Indes En Deca et au de la Du Gange; avec Les Isles de la Sonde, Borneo, Les Moluques et Les Philippines. Partie Orientale* (Map of the Indies and Deca with that of the Gange; with the Islands of Sonde, Borneo, the Moluccas, and the Philippines. Oriental Part), M. Bonne, September 1781
6. *Les Isles Philippines Molucques et de la Sonde* (The Philippine Islands, Moluccas and the Sonde), Sanson d'Abbeville, 1654
7. *Isles Philippines* (Philippine Islands), George le Rouge, 1748
8. *India Orientalis, cum Adjacentibus Insulis* (Oriental India, with Adjacent Islands), George Matthaeus Seutter, 1730



Figure 1. Sketch of the Tupaceous Area of Taal Volcano as Mapped by Centeno (Adams 1910)

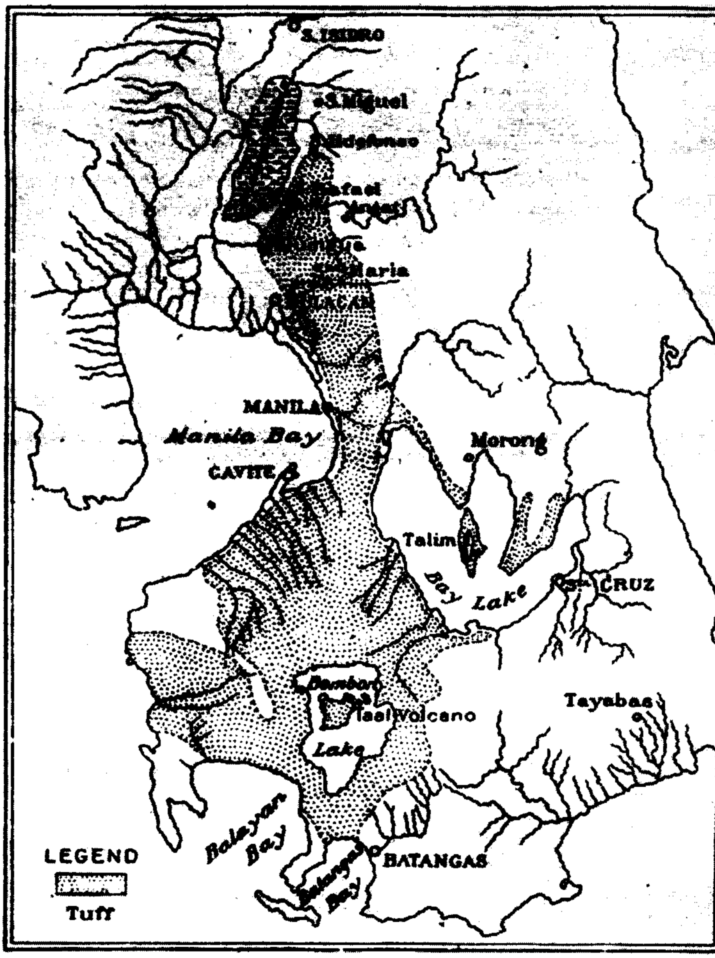


Figure 2. Sketch Showing the Geologic Mapping of Southwestern Luzon, by Von Drache (Adams, 1910)

An Exploration of Pila, Laguna

Recently, I joined a group of students and enthusiasts in a trip to Pila town in Laguna. It was organized by Mrs. Pilar Habito, a native of the town. The present town of Bai is just next to Pila, and I thought that an exploration through the town of Pila—especially the archaeological excavation of an ancient cemetery with Chinese artifacts and signs of

cremation—is quite significant in relation to the study of Ma'I. The town mayor, Wilfredo Quiat, gave me a copy of *Treasures of Pila* (2000) published by the Pila Museum. The monograph contains two erudite articles on the history and culture of Pila, one by Cynthia Ongpin Valdes, the other by Dr. Luciano Santiago. Most importantly, it contained photographs of the Chinese ceramics and other artifacts unearthed in the area during archaeological diggings.

The first paragraph of Valdes's (2000, 3) "Pila in Ancient Times" is quite striking in relation to my subject of interest:

> Laguna de Bay, especially along its coasts and rivers, was highly accessible to foreign vessels bringing merchants with goods to trade for local products. Movement of goods and people also flowed into the Laguna de Bay area from Manila Bay, linking it with the wider geographical area including Sta. Ana or Lamayan. Flat, arable land and bountiful protein foods, such as fish and eels, made the Laguna de Bay area a highly attractive place. Chroniclers have long fantasized that kingdoms and chiefdoms flourished here in pre-Hispanic times. Judging from the wealth of ceramics recovered in the area, it can be surmised that the people in this area were quite prosperous.

The mention of the people's prosperity, and the goods and people that flowed from Manila Bay to Laguna de Bay, shows that Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay were connected in earlier times.

Valdes's article described the excavation in Pila's barrio of Pinagbayanan in September 1967, conducted by Mr. and Mrs. Leandro Locsin, with researchers from the University of San Carlos. The project was supervised by archaeologist Rosa C. P. Tenazas. These excavations involved two sites in a one-hectare area. Apparently, during the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, two successive settlements inhabited the area and used them as burial grounds. Most significantly, evidence of cremations in secondary burial jars was discovered, and Chinese ceramics, obviously used as burial offerings, were unearthed. Cremation burials at the Pinagbayanan site were either directly in a pit or in a container or vessel. Because I am not aware of any Mindoro accounts where cremation burials are mentioned, I find it more credible to think that the "burning of the dead husband" mentioned in Wang Da-yuan's *Dao-I*

Zhi Lue could refer to the practice of cremation uncovered in Pila.[3] This is another piece of evidence that the Ma'I in Chinese records may well be Ba'I.

The townsfolk explained that the area of Pinagbayanan was abandoned in early times because of continuous flooding, indicating that the towns surrounding Laguna de Bay fall below sea level. The bay dwellers later moved to the Pagalangan area, where a massive stone church, a basilica complete with convent, was constructed in a span of eighteen years—from 1599 to 1617. Santiago (2000, 17), in his "Pila: The Noble Town," writes:

> According to oral traditions, from the center in Pinagbayanan, and later in Pagalangan, the datu (chief) of Pila ruled over one of the biggest territories in the area, which extended as far as Talim Island, Tanay, and other lakeshore towns.

That would have made him quite a wealthy chief.

The existence of the basilica suggests that the Ba'I area was quite developed, advanced, and prosperous, probably even in pre-Hispanic times. Santiago (2000, 18) mentions that Pila was conferred the special title of La Noble Villa (The Noble Town) in c1610 by the Spaniards, a title and a rare honor given to only four other towns—Cebu, Vigan, Libon in Bicol, and Oton in Panay. A nearby barrio in Pila is called Nanhaya, which Valdes (2000, 5) surmises could refer to *Nanhai,* or South Seas in Chinese, a term used for the extensive foreign trading during the era of the Song (960–1279) and Yuan (1279–1368) dynasties. Furthermore, as proof that the people of Pila were far advanced in culture and civilization, the second printing press in the Philippines was established by the Franciscans in Pila in 1611, and the first Spanish-Tagalog dictionary was printed in 1613 in Pila by Tomas Pinpin and Domingo Loag (ibid.).

The accumulating evidence after the exploration in Pila, Laguna, points strongly to Bai as the Ma'I in the Chinese records. In contrast to Mindoro, the developed, advanced, and prosperous towns of Laguna, which used to be part of a large realm of Ma'I, provide convincing grounds to believe that the Guangzhou people carried out a prosperous trade here in ancient times.

Significant Findings of Other Scholars

This author is not the first to ascertain the connection of Ma'I to Bai; others have done so in the past but, unfortunately, their findings did not receive attention from other researchers. The hypothesis or viewpoint of those authors might not have been defended adequately, or the basis for saying so had not been well established. But, the same can also be said for the opposite, that the basis for saying that Mindoro is Ma'I was also not adequately defended and not well established, since it was based mainly on the similar sound of Ma'I and Mait. That Mindoro is Ma'I became an accepted fact, and the possibility of it being erroneous was not discussed further.

We should recall that scholars like Dr. José Rizal, his good friend Ferdinand Blumentritt, and Dr. Wang Teh-ming did not conclude that Ma'I is Ba'I; on the contrary, they provided good leads to challenge the conventional wisdom. In 1892 Blumentritt pointed to three likely places as the Ma'I referred to in the Chinese records: (1) Luzon, and that Ma'I was the ancient name of Luzon; (2) Laguna de Bay, and that Ma'I was originally Bahi or Bahy, the old name of Bay; and (3) Bulacan, and that Gatmaitan (meaning chieftain Maitan) was the head of the Tagalog region of Bulacan (Blair and Robertson 1973, 185). Earlier, in 1882, Blumentritt pointed to Mindoro as Ma'I, but in his Spanish translation of Chao Ju-kua's *Zhu Fan Zhi* in 1894 he changed his opinion by identifying Ma-I or Mayit as Ba-e (Bahi), the Manila-Laguna region in Luzon (Zaide 1990, 5 fn. 6).

The most significant findings, however, were those of national hero, Dr. José Rizal. On 6 December 1888, Rizal wrote a letter from London to A. B. Meyer about his findings regarding Ma'I (Rizal 2000, 44):

> I agree then with Prof. Blumentritt that Ma-Yi can very well be Luzon and perhaps a part of it, if it is not Manila. It must be inhabited by Tagalogs. . . Undoubtedly the phrase "the meandering curves of a creek," inhabited by thousands of families, makes us suspect that it refers to Manila or its bay, perhaps the Pasig River until Laguna de Bay. . . . The gentleness of Tagalog customs that the first Spaniards found, very different from those of other provinces of the same race and in Luzon itself, can very well be the

> effect of Buddhism "(There are copper Buddha's images)." . . . The Chinese writer speaks of "mandarin's place" perhaps because he saw a certain culture among the Ma-Yi not inferior to that of China, a state that knew how to defend itself well. For that reason, "Robbers seldom come to this territory." . . . as we know from the Spaniards that the traders of Luzon went as far as Sebu, Panay, and other islands, we agree with Prof. Blumentritt that Ma-Yi is Luzon . . .

Rizal concluded that Ma'I is Luzon, just as Blumentritt concluded that Ma'I is in the Manila-Laguna region. Rizal also mentioned that the Tagalog lived in Ma-I and that the Pasig River reached up to the Laguna de Bay. Both Rizal and Blumentritt located Ma'I in the southern Tagalog area, somewhere in the vicinity of Bai. Rizal's own family hailed from Calamba, Laguna, where he grew up. His observations and conclusions were quite convincing but, unfortunately, ignored by historians and scholars.

This author regrets that, from Rizal's findings about Ma'I (Go 2001), I failed to carefully interpret or give credence to Rizal's other points in his letter to Meyer, because I had operated on the accepted wisdom that determined Ma'I as Mindoro. This was a grievous oversight. In reviewing Rizal's views on Ma'I, his erudite scholarship can be easily discerned. He was, indeed, fit to be considered a great scholar.

Lastly, Chinese-Filipino historian Dr. Wang Teh-ming must also be mentioned. His 1954 Master's thesis also connected Ma'I with Ba'I. Although he leaned toward identifying Ma'I to be in Batangas, Wang (1967, 406) did not rule out the possibility of Laguna: "In my opinion, Ma-I or Ba-I was primarily located in the Batangas region, including: Cavite, Laguna, and at least a part of Manila, Rizal and south Tayabas, besides the province of Batangas."

Summary of Points

Aside from the facts mentioned, unearthed in the author's research trips and examination of maps, more findings were also uncovered in my research from 30 April 2002 to 5 October 2002. Again, these findings supported my hypothesis that Ma'I could hardly be Mindoro but rather Bai of Laguna. Note that Mait in Mindoro is the one and only source

ever cited to point to Ma'I as being in Mindoro. Here I enumerate findings that support the view that Ma'I is Bai in Laguna:

1. Ba'I was the old name of Laguna province and it also used to be the provincial capital. Moreover, the earlier province of Ba'I covered such a wide area that also included the province of Rizal and part of Quezon province. Hence, Ba'I was a much more flourishing center than any part of Mindoro was.
2. The sound of Ba'I is homophonous to Ma'I. In fact, Ba'I, rather than Mait, is closer in sound to Ma'I.
3. There is no Chinese equivalent for the sound of "B," and the Chinese usually use the sound "M" to replace "B." So the Ma'I in Chinese character could indeed be Ba'I.
4. The indigenous tribes of Mindoro, known as the Mangyan, are made up of small communities today of about thirty families each and live simply in the underdeveloped and impoverished mountain areas in Mindoro. I doubt if these indigenous tribes could have been the same Ma'I people who "brought precious merchandise to the shores of Guangzhou" a thousand years ago.
5. Manila Bay and Laguna de Bay were contiguous in early times. They used to be connected, and one could readily sail to Laguna through Manila Bay. Later volcanic eruptions and debris created a strip of land that separated the bay from what became the lake.
6. Laguna people were quite advanced and prosperous. A wealth of Chinese ceramics was excavated in Laguna, and goods and people easily flowed from Manila Bay to Laguna de Bay.
7. At some excavation sites in Pila, Laguna, evidence of cremation in secondary burial jars was discovered, and Chinese ceramics, evidently used as burial offerings, were unearthed. This could point to the cremation mentioned in the Chinese accounts.
8. Based on *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas 1565–1615* (de San Agustin 1998), Luzon was divided into twelve provinces. One of them was Laguna de Bay, which included the towns of Bay, San Pablo, Santo Tomas, Tabuco, Biñan, San Pedro, Tunasan, Pila, Santa Cruz, Baños, Nagcarlan, Liliw, Mahayhay, Pagsanjan, Lumban, Paete, Pangil, Longos, Paguil, Mabitac, Morong, Tanay, Bad-as, Cabooan, Siniloan,

and Binangonan (ibid., 53). What should be noted is that the towns of Morong, Tanay, Bad-as (Baras), and Binangonan, now part of Rizal province, were once all part of the province of Bay. This means that the earlier province of Ba'I (Bay) was spread over a much wider area than the present Laguna province, where the present town of Bai is found.

9. Corroborating the oral tradition cited by Santiago (2000) on Pila, Laguna, Odal-Devora (2002, 36) mentions a legend that "a once powerful matriarchal and water-based kingdom [was] believed to exist in the vicinity of the Lake Region (Rizal and Laguna), including the territories of Batangas, Quezon, Nueva Ecija, Bulacan, Pampanga, Manila Bay area, Mindoro, Marinduque, and the land which is now called Metropolitan Manila." Although what Odal-Devora cited can be treated as a semilegendary and semihistorical folktale, it offers a clue to a historical consciousness concerning a vast and rich kingdom or realm of Bai. This kingdom of Bai naturally included the southern Tagalog or southern Luzon area and even parts of central Luzon.
10. The earliest artifact of a written material excavated in the Philippines originated from the province of Laguna. This is the Laguna paleograph copper plate c900, excavated from the mouth of the Lumbang River. The inscriptions on the copper plate documented a debt payment, suggesting that, as early as the tenth century, Laguna already had an advanced civilization and wide-ranging relations. The copper plate mentions the leaders of Pailah and Puliran, which could possibly be Pila and Pulilan, respectively (Valdes 2000).
11. The name Laguna de Bay or "Lake Bay" was derived from the old Spanish province of Bai and Laguna de Bay literally means the lagoon of Bay (Bai). At present, the name Ba'I refers only to the town of Bay, or Bai, in Laguna. Spaniards often denoted the ē sound as "y." Hence, Spanish orthography rendered Ba'I as "Bay." While Bai was pronounced originally as the two-syllable "ba-ē," American occupation of the Philippines resulted in the word "Bay" being pronounced like the English word "bay," although not as bā but as bī (buy). The original name Ba'I, or Bai, was all but forgotten, and researchers could no longer find a link with the Ma'I men-

tioned in the Chinese records. When the original Ba'I later on became more popularly known as Laguna, the more its connection with Ma'I was lost.

12. Ba'I was the earliest capital of Laguna, and only in 1688 did Ba'I fall under Pagsanjan. As early as 1571, Spanish friar Martin de Rada went to Ba'I and established a church there, in the same year that Spanish colonizers occupied Manila.[4] That this happened at the very start of Spanish colonization indicated that Ba'I was a developed and populous area. That Ba'I was the earlier name of the province of Laguna and became the capital up to 1688 was not coincidental, but indeed evinced that Ba'I had an advanced culture.
13. References to Ma'I in *Zhu Fan Zhi* mentioned details such as "several thousands of families gathered"; "in front of the official plaza/park"; and "the kingdom was surrounded by walls with a gate."[5] The Ma'I described in the Chinese records already enjoyed a degree of sophistication. It is easier to imagine this sophistication to have existed in ancient Bai than in ancient Mindoro. In fact, in 1570, when the Spanish governor-general, Legazpi, left Panay to go to Manila, he passed by the mouth of the Baco river in Mindoro, but did not stop there. Mindoro was described in *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas, 1565–1615* thus: "It is little inhabited with peaceful people because it is mountainous and rough. . . . The rest of the islands is inhabited by wild mountain people. Only the bees enjoy peace on the island because of their quiet and hard work. . . . This large island has rich but difficult to cut lumber because of its tremendous girth" (de San Agustin 1998, 65). In describing the island's products, the book only mentioned honey from bees and abundant lumber which were hard to chop down. Nowhere was there any description of the exotica and precious cargo of native products that could have been bartered with Guangzhou as early as the tenth century.
14. According to the father of Philippine anthropology, Prof. Otley Beyer (Wang 1967, 241), "Results of our exploration indicate that downtown Manila was inhabited only from about 1480 or 1500 onwards." If Beyer's findings can be established, then Ba'I in 1480 and before 1500 was even more developed than the greater Manila

area. Thus, rather than Manila, it was Ba'I that brought "precious cargo to the shores of Guangzhou."

15. It is time that the conclusion of Blumentritt and Rizal concerning Ma'I as located in Luzon be given credence. There in Ba'I the Tagalog lived in a thriving civilization, and the Pasig River reached up to the lake later christened Laguna de Bay. The interpretation of Chinese-Filipino historian Dr. Wang Teh-ming that connected Ma'I with Ba'I should also be revisited. Even if he tended to believe that Ma'I was in the Batangas region, he nonetheless saw this region as including Tayabas, Cavite, and Laguna.

Conclusion

Because the accounts contained in *Zhu Fan Zhi* and *Dao-I Zhi Lue* are too scanty in detail, they are not sufficient to prove the accuracy of the accepted wisdom that referred to Mindoro as Ma'I. From my own examination and exploration, a new historical interpretation into the puzzle is now offered. Reference to Mindoro as Ma'I cannot stand on the basis of the existence of a place and people called Mait. On the other hand, there are good reasons to seriously consider Bai/Ba'I as the place referred to as Ma'I in the Chinese accounts. *Zhu Fan Zhi* and *Dao-I Zhi Lue* gave descriptions of customs and traditions in Ma'I, and the Chinese accounts concerning cremation find support in the archeological excavations in Pila, Laguna. No similar archeological finds have been unearthed in Mindoro. Folktales and other oral tradition have yet to be discovered in Mindoro that would indicate the existence of an ancient civilization whose products were highly valued in the trade with Guangzhou. For the present, the most convincing support are ethnographic data suggesting that the environment and people of Bai, or Bay, and of the general Laguna area were prosperous, cultured, quite developed, and literate. They yielded treasures and rich products that were bartered with the porcelain, silk, iron, and other goods brought to Philippine shores by Chinese traders. The leaders of Ba'I possessed a credible position and stature to carry on trade with the Chinese as early as the tenth century. In contrast, no such evidence is available for Mindoro. Unless evidence can be unearthed to weigh in on the side of

Mindoro as the Ma'I in the Song Dynasty records, prudence should lead scholars to consider that Ma'I may actually be Bai of Laguna.

Notes

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1. Note that Scott got the year wrong: it is 971, not 972.

2. Translations of the more important ancient Chinese documents were done by Wu 1975 and Wang 1967.

3. *Zhu Fan Zhi* and *Dao- I Zhi Lue* also gave descriptions of customs like the practice of a wife sacrificing herself during a husband's funeral: "when the body of their dead husband is burning, [the wife] get into the funeral pyre and die" (Zaide 1990, 10).

4. From the text of a marker in front of the church in the town of Bai, Laguna.

5. The *Zhu Fan Zhi's* account on "Betel Nut" described a product of Ma-I as "pigeon's heart and big stomach" betel nut. Such information can be used to further investigate whether Bai is indeed the Ma'I in the Chinese accounts.

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